

Mr. THOMAS. I ask that I may speak up to 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SENATE PRIORITIES

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise to reflect a little bit on the issues we have before us and the idea that we have some things to do that are priorities. I think most of us would agree to a certain set of priorities, and that we ought to be dealing with those priorities and moving forward with what we have to do. We have known this for quite a long time, as a matter of fact.

I am sure the folks on the other side of the aisle will get up and say the Republicans are blocking everything; that is not true. We need to put a priority on what we are seeking to do and get those jobs done.

We have three more appropriations, I think, out of the 13 with which to deal. We ought to be doing that and we are working on one now.

Conference reports, which will be coming back—handle those.

Certainly, I think everyone is committed to the idea of doing an economic stimulus package. I understand there are different points of view, and it is understandable because I don't think anybody knows precisely what it is that will have the most and quickest impact on the economy. Nevertheless, we need to do that; we need to do some things that are short term that have an impact. Most of us understand that.

We need to finish up airport security. That has to be done, of course, before we go.

Somewhere along the line, of course, bioterrorism is something that needs to be done.

We had hoped as part of the stimulus package or related to it we could get a date or do something with energy. If there is anything that impacts the economy, certainly it is an energy policy. An energy policy also, of course, is becoming vital to what we are seeking to do in the Middle East.

The idea that here we are in kind of a shutdown, when we are kind of in a press to get things done, and it seems like an opportunity to stick on everything that everybody has ever wanted to do is not a very good way to manage this place. It is not a very good way for us to set the priorities that this country needs, which is our job, and then to get on with doing it.

I have to say it gets a little discouraging sometimes for us to be going along with all this to do and somehow we can't seem to get with it. We have not even voted in the last 2 days in a rollcall vote.

I know it is a difficult thing to do. I am not critical of anyone particularly. But I think collectively we ought to come to the snubbing post and say we have these things to do and here is

what we have to do to them and put aside some things that have been hanging around forever and put them on something that is going in, which is always the impact and effect of coming down to the end.

I have to share a certain amount of frustration with what is happening. We are not going to agree on every issue. To not understand that is naive. But we could agree on saying we have to get this job done. Some have to give up this or have to give up that, but we have to do it.

I feel very strongly about the energy issue. I have been part of the group that has worked on that for a very long time. I do believe it has, indeed, always been important to have a policy, to do something more about domestic production. But it is even more important now, and clearly so.

I can't think of anything, as a matter of fact, that probably has more impact on the economy than the availability and cost of oil and we produce that oil and the cost of production.

These are the kinds of things we can do. So I am hopeful that as we work towards adjournment time, which can't be too far off, we will set a list of priorities. We should say: These are the things we need to do. Here are our priorities. Let's do them. Let's get on with it.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. SESSIONS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator withhold?

Mr. THOMAS. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

#### DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002—Continued

AMENDMENT'S NOS. 2042, 2045, AND 2054,  
WITHDRAWN

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I have offered three amendments today: Amendment No. 2042, a wage index adjustment amendment; amendment No. 2045, calling for a study on AIDS prevention program funding; and amendment No. 2054, an amendment dealing with a study on student loans, with the goal of reducing fraud and abuse in student loan programs.

Having worked with the leadership and the floor managers on these amendments, I withdraw all three amendments at this time, with the understanding that amendments Nos. 2045 and 2054, with modifications, would be made part of the managers' amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have spoken with the managers of the bill, and what the Senator from Alabama

has said is correct. If, for some reason, the managers cannot agree to these amendments—and they have indicated they would—the Senator would have a right to reoffer these amendments.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator REID for his courtesy, as always.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The three amendments are withdrawn.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ENERGY POLICY

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I would just like to share a few remarks at this time concerning the energy bill. We need to improve our production of energy within the United States, and I would like to share a few thoughts about why I think it is a critical part of stimulating the economy.

At this time of economic slowdown, we need to create circumstances that will allow the economy to grow and flower. It has struck me for some time—and I have mentioned this on the floor previously—that our economic slowdown began over a year ago, and it began not long after we saw a tremendous surge in the price of energy. The price of a barrel of oil in the United States was as low as \$13 a barrel. It soon leaped to \$30 a barrel. And 60 percent of all the oil we utilize in the United States is purchased abroad.

So there was a tremendous transfer of American wealth. We got no more oil—not a single barrel of oil—but we were paying more than twice as much for that oil as we were paying just months before it surged upward.

That drained a great deal of money from this economy. It demonstrated, with great clarity, the dependence we have on foreign oil. And most of the reserves of foreign oil are in the Middle East. It has pointed out the dangers we face if we do not make some changes.

Now we are engaged in hostilities in the Middle East, and we see, once again, just how fragile that supply of oil is to our Nation, and how quickly it can be interrupted.

Our economy needs to improve. I think it is incumbent on us to consider, quite seriously, reforming our energy laws so that we can produce more energy in this country. If we can do that, we will be able to keep more money at home. So when a well is drilled, the question is, Will it be drilled in Saudi Arabia or Iran or Iraq or Kuwait, or will it be drilled somewhere in the United States? When it is